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INFO RUEHTH/AMEMBASSY ATHENS 7199  
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SUBJECT: ANKARA MEDIA REACTION REPORT  
MONDAY, MAY 15, 2006

#### In Today's Papers

Controversy Over Turkey's New President  
Hurriyet, Milliyet, Sabah, Cumhuriyet, Radikal, Zaman and others: The main opposition CHP leader Deniz Baykal said that early elections should be held prior to the election of Turkey's new president by the parliament in 2007. "The existing parliament is not fit to choose the new president, who will determine the future of Turkey for seven years," Baykal said. Former President Suleyman Demirel continued his criticism of the ruling AK Party's policies, stressing in today's Radikal that it would be difficult for Erdogan, who had a "credibility problem," to become Turkey's new president at a time of heated debates over headscarves and secularism. "The new president must be chosen by the Turkish people in a two-stage election system. Only 17 million out of the total 41 million votes are represented in the current parliament, which means that some 60 percent of the national will is not represented. It will be difficult for Erdogan to become president when he has not been able to erase the suspicion that he is concealing an Islamic agenda," Demirel said.

#### Armenian, Greek Lobbies Campaign to Block US Missile Sale to Turkey

Aksam, Star, Cumhuriyet, Yeni Safak: Armenian and Greek lobby groups have joined forces in the US Congress in an effort to block a planned sale of cruise missile systems by the Pentagon to Turkey. The Pentagon's Defense Security Cooperation Agency (DSCA) announced on April 28 that it had notified Congress of the intended sale to the Turkish Air Force of 50 AGM-84K air-to-ground SLAM-ER missile systems. According to the press reports, 4 US Congressmen with close ties to the Armenian and Greek lobbies have signed a letter in opposition to the proposed sale.

Turkish Company's First Oil Well in Northern Iraq  
Aksam, Sabah: The first oil well belonging to a Turkish-Canadian joint venture began operations in Taq-Taq in Northern Iraq yesterday. The Turkish 'General Energy' and Canadian 'Addax' companies arranged an official ceremony yesterday for their joint venture. The Northern Iraqi Kurdish region's Prime Minister Nechirvan Barzani and his deputy, Omer Fettah, attended the opening ceremony. The Turkish-Canadian joint venture is planning to establish two other drilling sites in the same area before the end of this year. The total capacity of the three oil wells combined is expected to reach 20,000 barrels daily.

New Regulation on Minority Foundations in Turkey  
Hurriyet and Radikal report that the Turkish government is taking steps to resolve one of the major obstacles on Turkey's path toward the European Union - the issue of minority foundations. A draft list approves 161 groups as foundations that will be authorized to collect donations. Hurriyet says that concerns about missionary activities might increase following the release of the regulation, but should not block efforts to find a solution to the controversial issue.

Tuzmen, Sahin, Sener Face Charges of Misconduct  
All papers report that State Minister Kursad Tuzmen's hotel and other expenses were paid by the Istanbul-based CNR Holding Co during an official trip to Paris in 2003. During his stay in Paris, Tuzmen allegedly lobbied in support of CNR, an international fair organizer. Tuzmen defended himself, saying that he had been the victim of a "political slander campaign." Hurriyet broke the story over the weekend, implying a secret relationship between Tuzmen and Ms Ceyda Erem, the owner of CNR. Meanwhile, Saturday's

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Radikal ran a front-page story charging Deputy Prime Minister Ali Sahin and State Minister Abdulatif Sener with malfeasance for allegedly accepting racehorses for 100,000 YTL (approximately 70,000 USD) from a group lobbying the government to decrease the share taken by the state in earnings from horse races. Both ministers responded on Sunday that they had agreed to pay 5,000 to purchase the horses. Monday's Hurriyet reports, however, that Minister Sener now intends to return his horse to its previous as a result of the media scrutiny.

Turkey Blocks Release of Gitmo Captive Kurnaz  
Hurriyet cites the German Focus magazine in claiming that Turkey's intervention in the talks between the US and Germany regarding the case of Murat Kurnaz, had delayed the release of the Turkish captive held in Guantanamo Bay prison. Turkey will reportedly send an investigation team to Guantanamo.

#### Editorial Comments:

"The Freedom Contradiction in the White House"  
Washington-based Ali Aslan wrote in the Islamist-intellectual Zaman (5/15): "The appointment of a former army general as CIA director has intensified the current debate in the US about civilians being isolated from intelligence agency oversight. The administration's overall tendency is to limit individual rights using a militarist and security dominated approach. All Americans with common sense are worried about the protection of their individual rights, as the war on terrorism is a long-term process. The current situation in the US represents a clear contradiction in the administration's policies: as basic freedoms at home are being limited due to security paranoia, the Bush administration claims to be on a mission to bring freedom to the entire world, including the Middle East."

"US-Turkey and Iran"  
Washington-based Yasemin Congar wrote in the mainstream Milliyet (5/15): "The US and Turkey are engaged in a new phase of bilateral dialogue regarding the Iran issue. Washington at this point is convinced that Ankara does not want an Iran with nuclear weapons. However, this does not necessarily mean that Iran will no longer be a thorny issue between Turkey and the US. First of all, the Bush administration continues to hold out military action against Iran as a possibility. Secondly, upcoming developments in the UN Security Council are of concern to Ankara. If the UN Security Council overcomes its differences and manages to unite on the Iran issue, Washington may launch an initiative to form a coalition of the willing against the Iranian regime. American officials are clearly saying that if and when this happens, the US will try to include Turkey and the EU in the coalition. Both of these possibilities are enough to irritate Ankara and have the potential to put Turkish-American cooperation on an uneasy footing."

TV News  
(NTV, 8.00 a.m.)

Domestic News  
- Prime Minister Erdogan said at the 'Developing Eight' (D-8) summit talks in Bali that if they join forces, the D-8 countries could become important actors in the international arena.

- The trial of the 16-year old suspected killer of Andrea Santoro, the priest murdered at the Santa Maria Church in the Black Sea city of Trabzon in February, will begin on

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Monday morning.

- The Turkish Parliament is to discuss this week the social security bill vetoed by President Sezer.

International News  
- Six bomb attacks claimed 35 lives in Baghdad on Sunday.

- A Hartford Courant report says the US is sending mentally unstable conscripts to Iraq because of a shortage of soldiers, a practice that has led to high suicide rates

among troops. These soldiers, most of who take anti-depressives, wander around at the frontlines "like time bombs."

- President Ahmadinejad said that Iran is ready to hold talks with all countries except Israel.

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